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ABSTRACT

Articles in this volume include the following: "Assessment Challenges in Supported Distance Learning: How the ABE Distance Learning Project Is Implementing the Massachusetts ABE Assessment Policies and Procedures" (Roger Hooper); "The NIFL LINCS Assessment Special Collection" (Dianna Baycich, Tim Ponder); "Making Sense of REEP" (Luanne Teller); "The BEST Plus--A New Way to Assess Oral English Skills" (Carol Van Duzer); "The BEST Plus at YMCA" (Susan Arida); "The Best Plus at El Centro del Cardena" (Alexandra Sulikowski); and "'Adventures in Assessment' Briefly Annotated Bibliography of Articles Focusing on In-Take, Placement, and Goal-Setting" (Marie Cora). (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (Author/VWL)

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Learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation in adult literacy

volume fifteen

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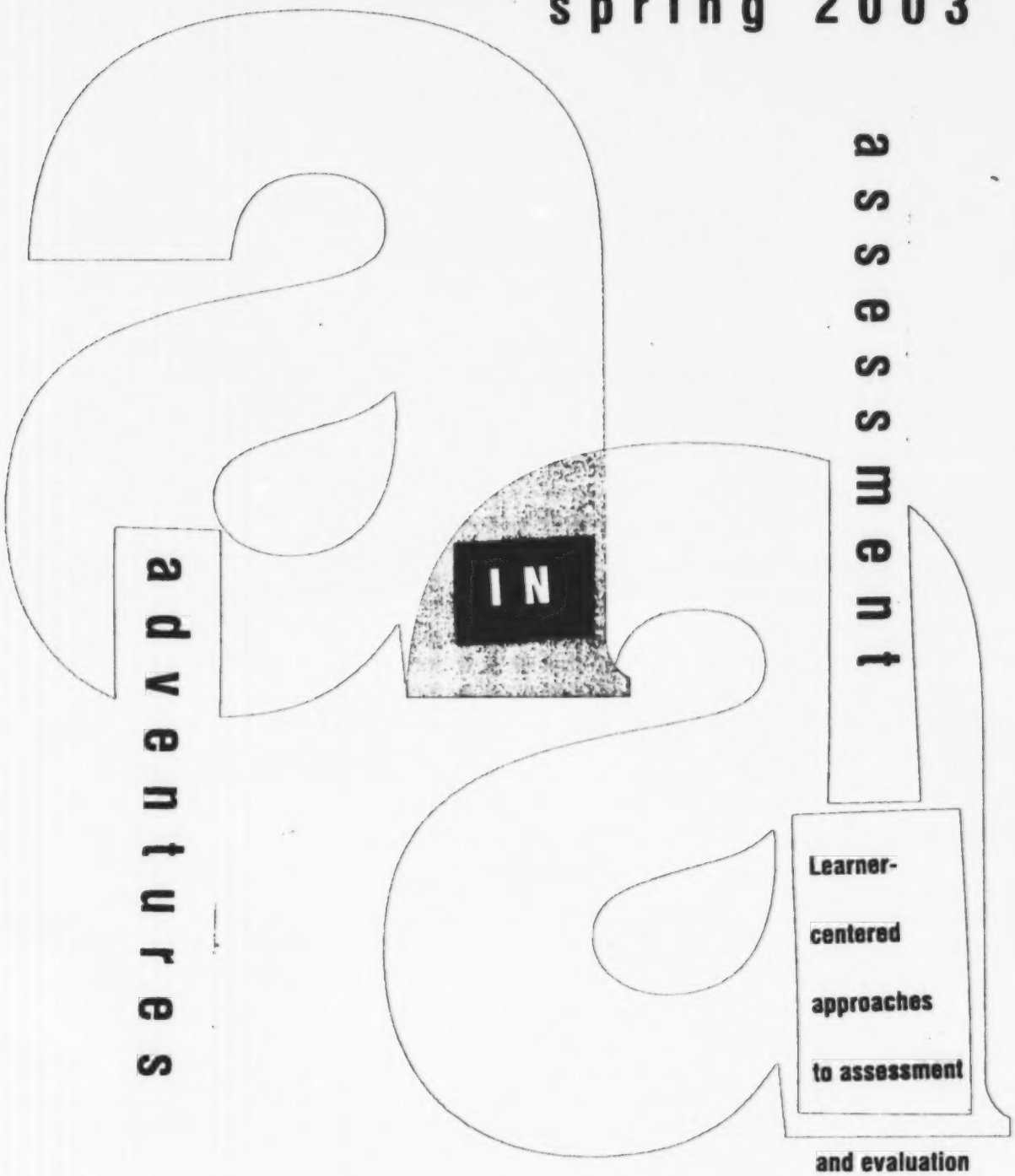

Learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation in adult literacy

volume fifteen

Editor: Marie Cora

Design: Marina Blanter

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.

SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks. Visit us at our website: www.sabes.org

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, *"Field Notes"* (formerly *"Bright Ideas"*), and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of *"Adventures in Assessment."*

The first three volumes of *"Adventures in Assessment"* present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2, Ongoing, shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3, Looking Back, Starting Again, focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests, and Volume 5, The Tale of the Tools is dedicated to reflecting on Component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6, Responding to the Dream Conference, is dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7, The Partnership Project, highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volumes 8-12 cover a range of topics, including education reform, workplace education, and learner involvement in assessment. Volume 13 focuses on issues related to building systems of accountability. Volume 14, *Examining Performance*, presents a range of articles that focus on performance-based assessment.

We'd like to see your contribution. If you would like to submit an article for our next issue, contact Editor Marie Cora.

Opinions expressed in *"Adventures in Assessment"* are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of SABES or its funders.

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Introduction. Volume 15: Assessment in Motion

BY MARIE T. CORA

The articles in Volume 15 are a reflection of the past year's continued work on building an accountability system for the state. Some writers contribute their experience learning to use newly mandated assessments, others write about their efforts to make the new assessment requirements fit their programs. There are also articles describing current assessment resources, and ones discussing the importance of the goal-setting process for the Massachusetts system. I think it's fair to say that all these are examples of "assessment in motion" — reflections of literacy workers who are in the midst of change in the world of assessment.

Roger Hooper writes about how the Massachusetts Distance Learning Projects are managing the new state assessment requirements. His article finishes with some reflective questions including whether these programs should develop an assessment suited to the uniqueness of the Distance Learning experience.

Dianna Baycich and **Tim Ponder** write about the National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection for Assessment. This website is an invaluable resource for practitioners looking for information and resources on issues in ABE assessment. There are an additional 10 topic areas covered in the Special Collections, all well worth the trip.

Two short pieces appear in this volume: one that advertises SABES' newest on-line resource, the Assessment Support Website launched in October of 2002. The other short article informs us about the Goal Setting Work Group convened by ACLS this spring, whose mission is to improve processes and tools for setting goals with students.

Last year, Massachusetts adopted the REEP Writing Assessment as one of the state's required tests. Folks from the Arlington, VA program who developed the REEP assessment contributed an article about the test and its scoring rubric in Volume 14 of *Adventures in Assessment*. In this volume, **Luanne Teller** writes about her program's experience learning to use this test; she also outlines for us what they find particularly useful about REEP, and some challenges with the assessment that they feel could be improved upon.

The BEST Test was also adopted as a state required assessment last year. Also at that time, field testing for the new computerized version of the test (called BEST Plus) was beginning. Massachusetts practitioners were involved with this field test. We first hear from **Carol Van Duzer**, who describes the new BEST Plus for the reader; and then from **Susan Arida**, who was a participant in the field test here in Massachusetts.

Finally, an annotated bibliography of *Adventures in Assessment* articles that focus on placement and goal-setting is included. This resource was developed last fall to help practitioners find materials they could use for placing students into classes and for setting goals with them.

Last spring, Massachusetts was at the beginning of a phase of change in our assessment landscape. Since the fall, practitioners and programs have been in the midst of learning and doing. What we are experiencing now is hands-on and sometimes trial by fire: we are in motion.

Your thoughts and ideas are welcomed and encouraged. If you would like to submit an article or have comments, please feel free to contact me at *mcora@worlded.org*

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Marie Cora, Editor.

Assessment Challenges in Supported Distance Learning: How the ABE Distance Learning Project is Implementing The Massachusetts ABE Assessment Policies and Procedures

BY ROGER HOOPER

The Massachusetts ABE Distance Learning Project is a statewide collaborative including three specially funded demonstration pilot sites, and statewide project coordination staff. Our vision of "supported distance learning" (SDL) includes delivery of content and instruction largely through technology and multimedia curriculum packages, but also includes learners in some face to face contact with teachers, counselors, tutors and other students for support and assessment. The integration of various supports into a distance learning delivery system reflects the commonly understood needs of all adult basic education learners.

These learners, who bring so much wisdom and life experience to the educational process, often cannot bring the tools we expect of the typical "student" such as time management, understanding of their own learning needs and styles, ability to prioritize and evaluate the material to be learned, and the skill to navigate the barriers that work and family often present to the adult learner. Adult basic education learners need supports to work with these academic and social issues. In classroom ABE programs, teachers and counselors assist the learner "on-site" with these issues when necessary. But learners in our SDL pilot programs, although similar in strengths and needs to all other ABE students, do not have the same level of immediate or frequent access to teachers and counselors to address these issues. Our Pilot Programs provide access to necessary supports for learners that can help ensure their retention and progress even while the major part of their learning takes place at a distance from the program site and the staff.

The mission of the Project is to research which supports best help adult learners to succeed in distance learning, to document models of effective SDL programming, and to recommend by the end of FY'04 a schedule of program quality indicators and cost factors for SDL. The Massachusetts Department of Education has committed to evaluating our recommendations prior to deciding whether to offer SDL among the program options fundable to all eligible programs under the next state multi-year ABE funding cycle.

Our Project agenda for FY'03 includes building effective strategies to assess learners, and evaluate program effectiveness in SDL. We are building these on the platform of services that our demonstration pilot sites have developed since the Project's inception four years ago.

The framework for this task is the Massachusetts Department of Education's Assessment Policy for ABE. The challenge is to create strategies that work within the specialized services developed in our pilot sites, and that also meet the overall requirements of that Policy.

"Our vision of "supported distance learning" (SDL) includes delivery of content and instruction largely through technology and multimedia curriculum packages, but also includes learners in some face to face contact with teachers, counselors, tutors and other students for support and assessment."

"In our broad SDL developmental project, assessment is an "umbrella" under which we include measuring participation, retention, progress and completion of goals."

The Agenda for ABE Distance Learning

The Massachusetts Adult Basic Education Distance Learning Project entered its fourth year of operations in March of 2003. The Project has made strides in a broad spectrum of areas of program development for SDL including:

- identifying and using technology appropriate and accessible to ABE learners who enroll in SDL programs; finding and implementing published multimedia curriculum packages that conform to the body of knowledge needed by ABE learners in SDL (and in traditional programs) — in both ESOL and in ASE/Pre-GED instruction;
- developing regional "hubs" through collaboration with other agencies and programs, doing outreach and recruitment of learners, and creating training and orientation models to bring these learners into the SDL program;
- developing and establishing within an SDL context supports for learners that support retention and educational progress;
- sustaining SDL pilot program staff with ongoing technical in-service support, and sharing lessons learned about program and staff development for SDL with the larger community of ABE practitioners;
- and exploring strategies for ASE/Pre-GED and ESOL learner assessment in SDL contexts.

Overall, assessment is a larger concept than just testing learners. In our broad SDL developmental project, it is an "umbrella" under which we include measuring participation, retention, progress and completion of goals. The Massachusetts ABE Assessment Policy focuses on the assessment of learners' level gain as established by standardized testing instruments.

Since our SDL pilot programs are included under this policy, the pilot sites are developing logistics to try and meet the state demands. Because the policy was designed to be implemented in a classroom-based learning program (students in classrooms with a teacher and a regular schedule of meetings over a specified cycle of instruction), it is a challenge to develop strategies that make it fit SDL programs in which our learners

- mostly (but not exclusively) work off-site and independently with multimedia curriculum packages;
- rarely work in groups;
- have a tendency toward "open entry/open exit" participation even if the services are designed in set instructional cycles;
- and only occasionally meet face to face with a trained, professional ABE practitioner.

A Variety of Assessment Issues

In addition to implementing the State policy for assessment of learner level and learning gain, our SDL development agenda includes other assessment issues:

- how to include SDL program planning needs in the State's Guidelines for Writing a Comprehensive Assessment of a Community's Needs and Assets;
- how to identify and assess practitioners' skills needed in SDL services in administration, instruction, counseling, technology "literacy," etc.;
- how to assess learners for readiness and pre-service training/orientation needs as they prepare to enroll in SDL instruction (including assessment of learning styles and technology skills);
- how to assess learner participation in the SDL services, when "attendance" cannot be measured as "seat time".

Implementing the 2002 State Assessment Policy

Initially, the Pilot Sites developed assessment strategies as follows:

ESOL Assessment

The ESOL pilot sites are structured around use of CROSSROADS CAFÉ (Intelecom and Heinle and Heinle Publishers, 1997; includes video, worktexts, photostory readers, partners' guide, assessment package, and teacher's guide). These sites have created tools including an intake/assessment instrument with specific references to CROSSROADS CAFÉ content for in-house placement.

For reporting progress and learning gain to meet state and national reporting requirements, the SDL programs initially administered the commercial assessments used in the parent agency's core classroom program (either the BEST Test or the ESLOA).

Of the two pilots using ESOL assessments, only one was using the BEST prior to FY'03, but still found it necessary to put staff through the statewide training and certification procedures needed to use BEST validly under the new state policy. The other pilot previously used the ESLOA, and thus needed to switch to the BEST Test and meet the required staff training. Also, both of these demonstration sites as well as their host agencies needed training on the REEP assessment.

ASE/Pre-GED

Initially, only one of the three pilot sites was focused on ASE/Pre-GED instruction instead of ESOL. Before the end of the second year of the project, however, both the other Pilot Sites began to include ASE/Pre-GED learners in their service plan, and all were implementing an appropriate multimedia curriculum package (WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS; developed and published in 1999 by PBS and KET-TV, currently distributed entirely through KET-TV; includes video, print, web, internet, and teacher guides). Currently, the pilot programs are also using (to some degree) TV411 (ALMA) and GED Connection (KET-TV/PBS) each of which as a similar range of component media resources.

Prior to the 2002 assessment policies, the sites either used the AMES or the ABLE to measure learning gain. Upon publication of the Policy, all three Pilot Sites converted to TABE and sent staff to train on this instrument as required by DOE.

Intake/placement tools were developed for learners in the ASE/Pre-GED programs as well. These include important

resources to assess the learner's readiness for computer-based distance learning in terms of both computer literacy and independent learning skills. An orientation for new distance learners following intake offers a chance for them to relate their technical skills to the specific learning program, or to develop skills which are assessed as weak or missing at intake. After this orientation, learners are transitioned into active instructional use of Workplace Essential Skills in the SDL program.

For Further Discussion

Below is a sample of questions, which might deserve further discussion and study.

1. *How do we best determine when and how frequently assessments are administered to SDL learners?*

The state policy refers to hours of instruction as seat time or attendance in class. However, in our Pilot Programs, we are counting participation by our SDL learners in a variety of ways, including independent learning supported by video, print, web, and CD-ROM/Software materials. The SDL learners do spend some time in direct face-to-face contact with teachers, and that might be considered the practical equivalent to attendance or seat time in a classroom setting. However, that's only part of the picture. In addition, our SDL learners receive instructional support at a distance, through (for example) mail, e-mail, and telephone. And even beyond that, these learners spend at least (on average) four times as many hours in independent learning "at a distance" supported by the materials mentioned above, than they spend receiving support from an instructor either face to face or at a distance. We are establishing a unique protocol for assessing participation and intensity of services based on this specialized approach to counting instructional intensity in SDL[1]. Policy for timing of administering assessments should reflect the unique criteria used to measure participation and intensity of services in SDL.

2. *What it the best strategy for making the initial assessment a low anxiety, non-threatening event for a newly enrolling SDL learner?*

The expectation in classroom-based programs is that the learner may need to become familiarized with the teacher, the class, and the expectations and procedures of the course before taking a test that will directly impact their education as an adult. For classroom programs meeting regularly several days a week, this is a readily manageable timing issue. But SDL offers a different challenge. Currently in the SDL programs, the learner may meet the teacher in an intake/enrollment session. The second meeting may be the orientation to the SDL program, which can involve from 2 to 15 hours of orientation and training, depending on the program and the learner. The next subsequent meeting may be several days or even weeks later, when the learner has completed an initial phase of independent 'supported distance learning.' At this meeting, the learner meets with his/her instructor to get support, orientation, and clarification of any problems. It may be difficult to identify any underlying

[1]Note that this work to create a systematic, reliable protocol to measure "participation" in distance learning in ways to incorporate time spent in independent, multimedia-supported learning, is motivated at least in part by the needs of NRS reporting requirements, and that the national consortium of states working with the Project IDEAL staff at the University of Michigan to establish standards and criteria for distance learning for adult learners is equally involved in this effort. Massachusetts is one of the thirteen states currently participating in Project IDEAL.

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process of familiarization and environmental comfort-building for the learner in this context, which is dramatically different than the experience in the classroom. At what point in this extended time frame does it make sense to "mark" a point in time when the learner will be familiar enough with the teacher and the services to be comfortable taking the initial assessment?

3. *How well does the assessment instrument used for supported distance learners "match" the contents and scope of their instructional program?*

In Massachusetts, the statewide adoption of a uniform, single set of assessment tools for ABE and ESOL learners overall required a team of practitioners and assessment specialists to "match" the standardized tests being evaluated to the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks. The goal was to locate, or if necessary, develop a standardized assessment tool that actually tests the knowledge and skills outlined in the state Curriculum Frameworks. However, in our SDL pilot programs, the overall scope and content of the instructional program is defined not simply by the state Frameworks but also by the scope and sequence of the commercially published multimedia curriculum packages that our supported distance learner work with. Since as much as 80% of the supported distance learners' participation in the educational program occurs with the use of these commercial multimedia materials (print, video, software, web, internet), should there be a specific effort to assess the "content match" between the assessment and the multimedia curriculum used in SDL programs, as well as with the content and scope of the state Frameworks used overall in Massachusetts ABE?

4. *Can a strategy for "distance assessment" for SDL programs be developed that will accommodate the standards and policy of the MA DOE Assessment Guidelines?*

Each of our three pilot sites in MA is doing assessment "by the book" according to the state policy. That means that each learner enrolling in SDL services must take the REEP, the BEST or the TABE assessment on site, with directed supervision of a trained practitioner. However, there are already some indications that some of the very factors that "qualify" an adult learner for SDL services versus classroom services may make this on-site, direct assessment a challenge. Those factors include a lack of transportation or child care, unsuitable work schedules, even physical handicaps that make it equally as difficult for a learner to come for an assessment as it would for them to come to class. The current practice is to find ways to overcome those barriers and bring the leaner into the program site for an assessment. But it is reasonable to look ahead and project a scenario where distance assessment (in some format yet undeveloped) will be as important to the leaner as the SDL program on instruction and learner support itself. We have no doubt that this is a high hurdle to reach, and that it is something for the long range rather than the current or emerging status of SDL, but it remains on the horizon for further exploration and perhaps developmental effort.

"However, there are already some indications that some of the very factors that "qualify" an adult learner for SDL services versus classroom services may make this on-site, direct assessment a challenge."

Roger Hooper manages the Massachusetts ABE Distance Learning Project through the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in the Graduate College of Education, University of Massachusetts/Boston. He coordinates the Project Partnership that includes SABES, Massachusetts DOE, and three Demonstration Pilot Sites based in the Northern Berkshires (Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts), greater Springfield (International Language Institute with Corporation for Public Management) and Cape Cod (Cape Cod Community College ACCCESS Program).

The NIFL LINCS Assessment Special Collection

BY DIANNA BAYCICH
AND TIM PONDER

LINCS is the Literacy Information and Communication System, a project of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). LINCS combines a variety of resources including online discussions, technology training, and an extensive database of literacy materials. One of the key components of LINCS are the Special Collections. The LINCS Special Collections are peer-reviewed, content-oriented collections of high-quality literacy practices and materials for use in adult education and literacy programs. There are currently 11 topics covered in the Collections including English as a Second Language, Equipped for the Future, Literacy and Learning Disabilities, and Policy and Legislation. The homepage for the LINCS Special Collections can be found at *http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/collections.html*.

The Assessment Special Collection (*http://literacy.kent.edu/Midwest/assessment*) launched in June of 2001 and funded in part by the Office of Adult and Vocational Education, provides individuals dealing with assessment and evaluation in adult literacy programs a means to access a variety of resources electronically. This Collection focuses on assessment and evaluation topics for both program and instruction. Professional development topics and current event information dealing with assessment are also included.

Sites for the Assessment Special Collection are found through recommendations by practitioners, postings on discussion lists, articles in various professional journals and newsletters, and web searches. Once sites are identified they are sent to a Core Knowledge Group (CKG) who decide if they are suitable for the Special Collection. The members of the CKG are considered experts in the field of assessment in adult education and currently represent the following agencies: Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State University; Ohio Literacy Resource Center; Stark County Even Start, Ohio; SABES/World Education, MA; Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center; National Center for Family Literacy; Partnership for Family Education and Support, Louisville, KY; and LIFT, Missouri Literacy Resource Center. Members of the CKG work in pairs to evaluate the sites based on the quality and usefulness of the information and the organization of the site. If the two reviewers do not agree, the site is sent to a third member of the CKG for review. New sites are added to the Special Collection several times a year. CKG members communicate by e-mail and periodic conference calls. The CKG also plans meetings at national conferences when several of them will be attending.

In the Assessment Special Collection you will find high quality resources with information about various aspects

"The LINCS Special Collections are peer-reviewed, content-oriented collections of high-quality literacy practices and materials for use in adult education and literacy programs."

of assessment and evaluation. Currently the target audiences are Teachers/Tutors and Managers/Administrators. We are planning to add information for students in the near future. A new focus of the collection addresses resources for state staff. Working with the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium and a small group of state staff from across the country, quality assessment information, models, and best practices relevant to state staff are being identified and reviewed for inclusion in this section to be launched in early 2003.

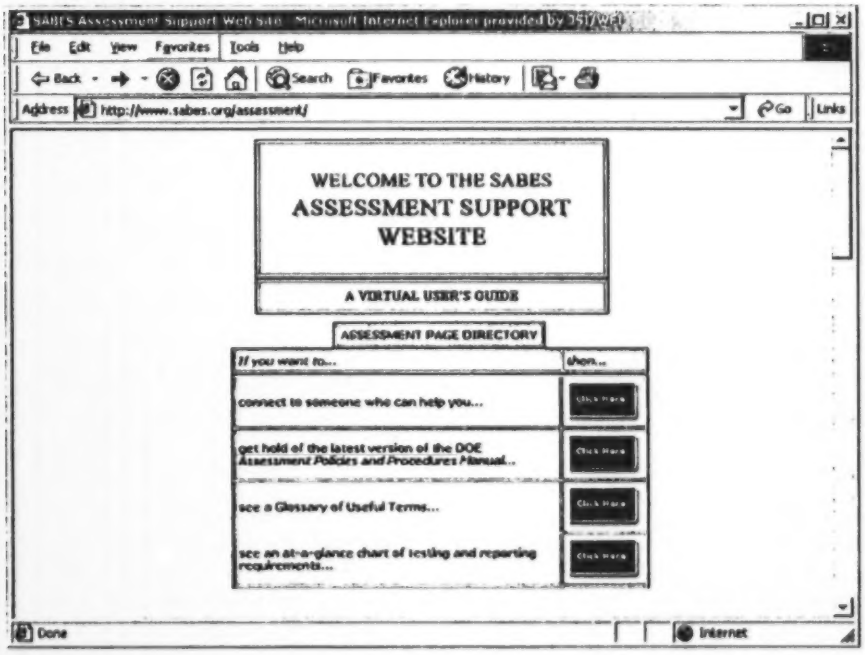
Since the Assessment Special Collection is relatively new, we are always happy to receive site recommendations. If you have sites you would like to recommend or have comments or suggestions about the site you can contact Dianna Baycich at *dbaycich@literacy.kent.edu* or Tim Ponder at *tponder@zhost.net*

Dianna Baycich has been working at the Ohio Literacy Resource Center for three years, and in Adult Education since 1991. She has a Master's degree in Adult Learning and Development and is currently working on her Ph.D. Dianna lives with 6 cats.

Tim Ponder is Assistant Director in charge of NIFL projects at the Ohio Literacy Resource Center. His current responsibilities include overseeing the Midwest Regional Technology Center and both the Family Literacy and Assessment Special Collection projects. Tim has worked with various state and national adult literacy organizations providing technical support and training in the area of technology.

Did you know...?

SABES has created an on-line resource to help you with state assessment requirements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Address http://www.sabes.org/assessment/
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WELCOME TO THE SABES ASSESSMENT SUPPORT WEBSITE
A VIRTUAL USER'S GUIDE
ASSESSMENT PAGE DIRECTORY
If you want to...
then...
connect to someone who can help you...
get hold of the latest version of the DOE Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual...
see a Glossary of Useful Terms...
see an at-a-glance chart of testing and reporting requirements...
Done
Internet

Go to www.sabes.org/assessment

- Testing requirements in brief
- Information on the BEST, TABE, and REEP Assessments
- Helpful links
- *Adventures in Assessment* on-line
- Assessment glossary
- Bibliographies
- And much more so visit often

For additional information and questions, contact Marie Cora at *MCora@worlded.org*.

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Did You Know?....
...About the Goal Setting Work Group?...

ACLS (Adult and Community Learning Services) has convened a group of eight practitioners to develop guidelines for setting goals with students. The Massachusetts ABE system strives to put student goals at its center. Programs and practitioners set goals with students in a variety of ways. It is the purpose of the Goal Setting Work Group to strengthen this work by identifying the field's best practices and by developing guidelines for goal setting processes.

The activities the group is engaging in over the course of the four month project include:

- Surveying program directors
- Collecting sample lesson plans for goal setting with students
- Conducting a literature review

The survey revealed that many practitioners see the goal setting process as separate from curriculum and instruction. Practitioners also felt that there is presently a dual system of goal setting: one that is useful for the teacher and student, and one that is useful for recording data in the SMARTT system. The Work Group is developing resources to bridge the curriculum gap by helping practitioners see goal setting as integrated with instruction. They also intend to propose processes that will enable goal setting to serve both the purposes of the teacher and student, and of the SMARTT system.

The survey also asked people what challenges they faced when trying to set goals with students, and recommendations they have for overcoming these challenges. The Group intends to make recommendations regarding these challenges to ACLS.

From the review of the literature on goal setting, the group intends to develop guidelines for good goal-setting processes that programs can use as a resource tool.

One of the things that the Group feels is important is that practitioners are sure on the purpose of goal setting. Goals can be used for a variety of purposes including for the program, for students, or for funders. The Group believes that goal setting needs to be embedded in a particular context in order for those goals to be collected effectively, and ultimately, for them to be useful.

This is an exciting project that should help practitioners better identify students' goals, and learn about ways that the process can be useful to inform instruction. The Group plans to present their findings and recommendations, along with sample lesson plans for goal setting, later this spring. We're looking forward to it!

"The purpose of the Goal Setting Work Group is to . . . identify the field's best practices and develop guidelines for goal setting processes."

Making Sense of REEP

BY LUANNE TELLER

I was prepared to be annoyed. That's right: just what I needed —another acronym to add to my list! Another mandate to add to my list! A beautiful summer day lost to training. Just what I needed. Boy, was I prepared to be annoyed.

Imagine my dismay. I like REEP. I have embraced REEP. REEP is making my program better. Imagine!

When we first learned that new assessment policies were coming, we were in just our second year of funding. As a new program, we struggled with finding "reliable" and "valid" assessment tools. We had great intake tools, and we were meeting all of DOE's reporting requirements, but we sensed we could do better.

During this time, we received a curriculum grant which we used to develop thematic units. We wanted to move away from standardized testing towards performance-based assessments. Our staff, experienced with student portfolio work, believed that performance-based assessments would allow us to more accurately assess student levels, enhance instructor feedback, and better track student progress. As we proceeded, we remained sensitive to concerns about objectivity, continuity over time and different instructors, and the amount of staff time required to evaluate work and prepare feedback for students.

We held many staff meetings, attended workshops, and conducted research. The task of assembling a comprehensive list of competencies was not nearly as daunting as the challenge of somehow converting or "crosswalking" it to an SPL (Student Performance Level) number that was "useable" for DOE reporting purposes. It has always been my management style to make data-driven decisions. I prefer to plan for program improvement based on what I "know I know" instead of what I "think I know," and what I knew for sure was that there had to be a better way.

Thank goodness for the work that ACLS, SABES, and the PAWG (Performance Accountability Work Group) did to facilitate our understanding about this necessary response to NRS and federal mandates. Over the course of the previous year, the workshops on *Standardized Assessments*, the *PAWG updates*, *NRS Requirements*, and *Using Data for Program Improvement* were immeasurably helpful in preparing for what lay ahead — and more importantly — slowly but surely bringing my staff up to speed. Thankfully, we were able to immediately skip right over the "reactionary mode" phase directly into "implementation mode." We felt adequately prepared and informed, and we fully understood this was a policy that was going to have to be followed. So, we decided to make the best of it. (Yes, my staff is beginning to be known as the "lemonade" squad.)

"Our staff, experienced with student portfolio work, believed that performance-based assessments would allow us to more accurately assess student levels, enhance instructor feedback, and better track student progress."

"Ultimately, we have found REEP to be efficient, minimally intrusive to instructional time, and more reliable and consistent than other tools we had used."

"We have begun placing students in "writing workshops" according to their REEP scores."

Ultimately, we have found REEP to be efficient, minimally intrusive to instructional time, and more reliable and consistent than other tools we had used. In fact, the information we are able to glean from student papers is well worth the time required to administer and score the tests. It frees us from trying to convert performance-based assessments to an SPL number, while providing detailed feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses.

We have begun placing students in "writing workshops" according to their REEP scores. This enables instructors to focus on more targeted instruction and also helps solve the "leveling" problem for students whose oral skills are significantly higher or lower than their reading/writing abilities. Most students have responded with enthusiasm, and feel like it's a "special" opportunity to be in these writing workshops/seminars.

Here is what we have learned from our first two rounds of REEP testing:

- We were somewhat surprised at the amount of commonality across papers. We are able to identify several areas of common writing errors which is helpful to classroom instruction.

- It seems obvious, but it bears repeating that some of our students are very gifted writers — a talent which has little to do with their ability to communicate in English. Even some of our most beginning writers are able to show "voice" and tremendous "spirit" in their writing.

- We value the level of scoring objectivity that comes from not having previously worked with the students. For example, scorers were not able to understand one student's writing about surgery on her hand. After the test was scored, we shared it with the instructor who was immediately able to derive the meaning because she knew the student had just had hand surgery. We feel the "disconnect" between the scorers and the students provides more reliable information.

- We have learned to be very specific in explaining to students how their work is scored and kept. In our post September 11th world, many of our students were cautious about replying to the prompt, "Write one bad thing about your life here." Students were afraid that we would "turn their papers over to the government." It's easy to understand why they would be reluctant to write anything bad about America. While I initially supported the idea of using "regional scorers," I now feel we need to be sensitive to these very valid concerns. How might writing be impacted if students felt that "outsiders" would have access to their papers?

- It really is important to "recalibrate" each time we administer the assessment. We find the anchor papers especially helpful in this process.

Some of our concerns/questions about the REEP include:

- We wish the rubric were more specific with greater detail for each level.

- Overall, we have found the REEP to be an accurate reflection of student

abilities and levels, however there is the "on any given day" aspect that applies to any standardized test. We were recently surprised to see one of our more advanced students score significantly lower on his second REEP test than on his first, only to later learn that there were extenuating circumstances. There is nothing we can do about this: we can't retest and the score must stand. We can only hope that his third assessment will be more reflective of his true abilities.

- The use of REEP as the official assessment in higher ESOL levels has given some students the impression that we — as a system — value writing more than oral communication. This is the exact opposite of what the majority of our higher level ESOL students want, which is to concentrate on pronunciation and speech.

- At our REEP training, we were told that a typical learner gain is .4 each year. If this is accurate, then it may be much more difficult to show learner gain based on federal SPL levels.

- In fact, after just two administrations of the REEP, we are somewhat surprised by the relatively small gains that students show, especially in the higher levels. It seems much harder to progress from a REEP level 5 to a level 6, than from a REEP level 1 to a level 2. Our Site Coordinator, an ESOL specialist, estimates that the year-end assessments will show greater gain. Students learning new material will require more practice before becoming confident enough to take new risks in their writing. I'm told that a little more time and a little more practice will work wonders.

Here is what we plan to do next:

- We are keenly aware of pending fiscal constraints, but how we would love another curriculum grant! While some have voiced concerns about the time required to implement the new assessments, we feel more acutely the lack of planning time to develop a strategy in response to what the assessments tell us.

- We would like to analyze and review the competencies/benchmarks established within our curriculum units and align them more closely with the REEP rubric levels. Since we are electing to work with students in writing groups based on their REEP levels, it will help instructors target instruction based on student portfolio and assessment writing. Of equal value, it will also provide students with clear information on their progress, including what they still need to master in order to move to the next level. We had begun work on these checklists, but found it difficult to convert them into SPLs. With the new assessment policies, we are free to develop them in a way that meets our instructional and student learning needs without concern for how they could be used for reporting purposes.

When asked to write about our experiences with the REEP Writing Assessment, I was quick to reply that on most days, we feel like we have more

"It really is important to "recalibrate" each time we administer the assessment."

questions than answers, and that we are an ever-evolving work in progress. I am thankful for a dedicated staff that embraces new ideas, and always looks to how they can better serve our students. Our Community Partnership remains steadfast in their support and encouragement in response to our changing needs. I am grateful for the help of my peers and never cease to be amazed by the level of support among ABE practitioners. Last, but not least, we are always open to new ideas. We are eager to hear from other programs, and hope you will share your experiences with us!

Luanne Teller is the Director of the Stoughton ABE Program at Massasoit Community College.

The BEST Plus – A New Way to Assess Oral English Skills

BY CAROL VAN DUZER

Massachusetts was invited by the Center for Applied Linguistics to participate in the field test of the new BEST Plus assessment that will be available in FY2004. Eight instructors from six programs were trained to administer the computer-assisted test. All participants were experienced adult education ESOL instructors, expressed interest in receiving the training, and had experience administering either the original BEST Test, or another oral assessment for ESOL. Each program tested 60 students within 3 weeks of the training session.

In this era of accountability, programs serving adult English language learners have been searching for an assessment tool that meets accountability requirements, can be administered in a reasonable amount of time, and provides feedback on learner progress and information that will assist in improving program quality. The BEST Plus responds to these needs.

Developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the BEST Plus is an individually administered face-to-face scripted oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners. The assessment is an adaptation of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Oral Interview that was developed during the early 1980s. Like the BEST, the BEST Plus assesses *interpersonal conversational* communication using every day language. It is able to assess a wider range of English language proficiency levels than the original BEST – from Student Performance Level (SPL) 0 (no ability whatsoever) to SPL X (native-like proficiency). The BEST Plus integrates current knowledge in the assessment of speaking and listening skills with the latest knowledge and practice in educational measurement to present a precise and flexible oral assessment. The adaptive nature of the BEST Plus means that examinees will receive different tasks each time they take the test, particularly as their skills improve and they are administered more challenging items.

The BEST Plus comes in two versions – a computer adaptive assessment on CD or a semi-adaptive print-based version. The BEST Plus begins with "warm-up" items to make the examinee feel comfortable conversing with the test administrator. These include personal information questions that are commonly asked of English language learners (e.g., What languages do you speak?). The examinees are then administered several sets of thematically related questions on topics such as health, recreation, and education.

"The adaptive nature of the BEST Plus means that examinees will receive different tasks each time they take the test, particularly as their skills improve and they are administered more challenging items."

In the computer-adaptive version, the test items are delivered via a computer. The test administrator asks the examinee a question presented on the computer screen, listens to the examinee's response, determines the score for that item, and enters the score into the computer. The computer then selects the next test item, choosing items most appropriate for the examinee according to the scores entered for each response. The only time the examinee sees the computer screen is if the test item involves a picture. At the end of each interview, the computer automatically generates a score report. This report includes the examinee's scaled score, SPL Level, National Reporting System (NRS) level, and sub-scores for listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. The time it takes to administer this version of the test ranges from 5-15 minutes, depending upon the ability level of the examinee. Generally, examinees with higher language proficiency have more to say, increasing the testing time.

In the print-based version, a quick locator test determines the level of test items (1, 2, or 3) that will most efficiently determine the functioning level of the examinee. These items are arranged in fixed-form level tests. The test administrator asks the examinee each item on the level test, scores the items, and marks the score on a score sheet. When the test is completed, the test administrator can total up the score to receive an estimate of the examinee's proficiency. A more precise level can be determined by entering the score data into a simple computer program that generates the same score report as the computer adaptive version. The print-based version of the test takes approximately 10-12 minutes to administer. There are three forms of the print-based version so that pre- and post- tests can be administered without compromising the validity of the test.

For both the computer-adaptive and print-based versions, the test administrator uses the same rubric to guide scoring decisions. Each examinee response is scored for three aspects of language:

Listening comprehension refers to how well the examinee understood the question.

Language complexity refers to how well the examinee organized and elaborated the response.

Communication refers to how clearly the examinee communicated meaning.

As the first computer-adaptive oral language assessment for adult English language learners, the BEST Plus is breaking new ground. At the same time, the BEST Plus is responsive to the needs of the field for an assessment tool that can link learner progress to accountability purposes, produce diagnostic information, be administered quickly, remain easy to score, and generate a new version of test questions each time it is administered.

The BEST Plus will be available from the Center for Applied Linguistics in late March 2003. For additional information, visit the BEST Plus web page at *http://www.cal.org/BEST/compbest.htm*.

Carol Van Duzer is the Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator at the National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) in Washington, DC.

The BEST Plus at YMCA

BY SUSAN ARIDA

As an instructor-participant in the BEST Plus pilot program, I am delighted to say that the BEST Plus just may be the assessment that has been missing from my life. I know that I am not the only adult educator who has been disappointed by the absence of an assessment method that could elicit data useful to learner, instructor and administrator . . . and (at the risk of sounding awfully demanding) be efficient, effective and fun. But the work that has been done with the BEST to earn the "plus" does give one reason to hope.

At the YMCA of Greater Boston's International Learning Center, I am an instructor, counselor and coordinator in a program that serves about 250 adult learners of diverse linguistic, educational and ethnic backgrounds. Our classes, offered morning, afternoon and evening are funded in several ways including a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education.

My experience with the BEST Plus includes on-site testing of 65 students representing proficiency levels 1-8 in July 2002. This was preceded in June by a two-day training led by the professionals from CAL who had developed the test. And then in December 2002, I was asked to score videotaped BEST Plus assessment conversations with 30 students.

Though my experience is limited to three sessions, it seems to me that the questions that make-up the BEST Plus respect and engage the learner. The prompts are modeled on conversations that might actually occur between two people from different cultures. The text, which must be followed exactly, is not stiff or condescending. The computerized program includes prompts of varying complexity, and has the ability to filter the test questions based on the answers given by the learner, so not every question associated with a particular subject needs to be asked. This eliminates embarrassment and unnecessary stress for the person being tested. This feature, while still providing data on a learner's language limitations, also gives the learner an appreciation for what he or she can do.

Some learners were reluctant to participate at first, but once the grapevine started humming, students actually began to ask to participate. They enjoyed the experience, which is in sharp contrast to the reaction most students had to the BEST without the Plus. Unlike its prototype, the BEST Plus's computer format presents colorful, contemporary and culturally diverse images and situations as lead-ins to conversations on a variety of subjects familiar in daily American life.

Nothing surprised me more, however, than my own enjoyment of the process. I expected to be bored and at the same time anxious about my ability to score

"The BEST Plus's computer format presents colorful, contemporary and culturally diverse images and situations as lead-ins to conversations on a variety of subjects familiar in daily American life."

"The BEST Plus also includes a range of subjects with questions of corresponding complexity so that the test can examine a particular skill with a variety of prompts, which make the testing more interesting and therefore easier for the test administrator."

consistently and accurately. But the training had provided a good base for evaluating learner responses and though the testing required a good energy level, it was not nearly as exhausting as the BEST because it was interesting to both the learner and the tester. The BEST Plus also includes a range of subjects with questions of corresponding complexity so that the test can examine a particular skill with a variety of prompts, which make the testing more interesting and therefore easier for the test administrator. Once accustomed to the scoring system, the program simplifies data input and offers a greater scoring range; it also allows simultaneous scoring of listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. My biggest challenge was finding a space that had computer access and afforded the necessary privacy. The right space is essential for consistent scoring and to maintain a comfortable mood so that the student can maintain his or her focus.

At this point, I can only speak about the experience of testing with the BEST Plus and what I observed among students during the testing. I have no way of determining its efficacy in providing data to funding agencies, program administrators and policymakers. We did not receive any feedback on student scores so I do not know if the scores squared with the learner's class placement, nor do I know if my interpretation of the test directives was consistent with other testers. I only know that my data was submitted and received. I also had a list of perhaps 10 or 15 points that I felt needed to be addressed. For example if the test is to be consistent and administered with exact adherence to the text, then idiomatic phrases that might have regional usage should either be eliminated, or like phrases common to a variety of locales should be included. Most of my comments did not address philosophical or contextual issues, but easily adjustable details.

I am interested in participating in the pilot again. I took on the project last summer because I actually had the time to do it. Our program director, Ionela Istrate sympathized with our frustration over mandated assessments without an appropriate assessment tool, and we always like the idea of trying new materials and new strategies. We were also curious about what the "Plus" might mean. We found that it is for the BEST, a positive addition.

Susan Arida wears many hats at the YMCA, International Learning Center of Greater Boston.

The BEST Plus at El Centro del Cardenal

BY ALEXANDRA SULIKOWSKI

I started working for El Centro del Cardenal in May 2000. I was in charge of the whole intake process for our ESL classes, and since my first day, I have been looking for ways of improving our current assessment procedures. I even developed assessment tools for the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that would reflect more accurately our students' proficiency levels in both their initial intake and progress evaluations. My problem, of course, was to get something that would be "standard" with all other programs and recognized statewide.

I continued using the BEST Test because it was a requirement, but I have to admit that it wasn't my "favorite."

Last year I heard about the BEST Plus pilot and I was very excited about participating.

In our program, 65 students participated in the field test. I tried to get candidates that would represent a variety of English proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, ages, and gender, so that the final results could be representative. It took approximately three weeks to complete the pilot.

I interviewed some newcomers and also some of our current students in order to get some feedback on their experience with the new BEST Plus. Those who were familiar with the original BEST Test liked the new test better. Because the test is set up as a conversation with me helped them to feel more relaxed, and so they participated more.

I liked the BEST Plus because it gave the students more "real" everyday topics to talk about like health, education, employment, recreation, travel, community — things they could relate to their own experience. The computer-based version was really appealing to the participants and to me since the exam took less time to administer, it automatically generated a score, and the pictures were colorful and easy to describe.

I also like the fact that language proficiency was divided into three categories: Listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. The scoring rubrics described more accurately the students' levels and, in most cases, made clear-cut boundaries among the more advanced students. This aspect is something that we did not have before with the original BEST Test.

There is also an "adaptive" version of the BEST Plus, in which the computer selects the next appropriate test item automatically, adapting to the student's skills. I didn't get the chance to work with the adaptive version and consequently, for the lower levels, some of the questions were too challenging, and sometimes discouraging for the participants. I am anxiously awaiting the final, adaptive version.

"I liked the BEST Plus because it gave the students more "real" everyday topics to talk about like health, education, employment, recreation, travel, community – things they could relate to their own experience."

"The scoring rubrics described more accurately the students' levels and, in most cases, made clear-cut boundaries among the more advanced students."

I was very happy to be able to participate in this pilot. I am really looking forward to seeing the final version. I hope this meets our needs for better assessment and, consequently, better program quality.

Alexandra Sulikowski is a program counselor in the HABLE Program (Hispanic Adults Basic Literacy in English for Education and Employment) at El Centro del Cardenal in the South End of Boston.

Adventures in Assessment
Briefly annotated bibliography of articles focusing on In-take, Placement, and Goal-Setting

BY MARIE T. CORA

Massachusetts has been building a system of accountability in ABE since January 2001. Our system attempts to place the needs of adult students at the center of our programs. Thus, helping adult students identify their own needs — or goals — becomes the first priority in the system.

Elsewhere in this volume, you have read about the Goal Setting Work Group convened by ACLS (Adult and Community Learning Services, MA DOE). It is their intent to adopt, or if necessary develop, a uniform goal-setting process for all programs to use across the state, so as to reach the goal of a more effective and equitable service delivery system.

Over the past 2 years, Massachusetts has found that the initial phases of enrolling a learner in our programs includes determining goals, and placing the student in a class appropriate for those goals, and appropriate to his or her level of literacy. Adventures in Assessment *has a wealth of information and resources in the areas of placement and goal-setting. Below are all the articles in Volumes 1 through 14 that focus on placement and goal-setting.*

Volume 1: Getting Started

All of these articles are relevant in terms of setting goals and discussing tools and procedures for in-take and/or placement of adult students.

"Assessment Issues: Research and Practice" by Lauren McGrail: Provides a brief overview of alternative assessment tools for in-take, in-class, and end of cycle.

"Partners in Evaluation" by Johan Uvin: Primarily about program evaluation, but conducted by participants; good ideas for ways to determine what adult students think.

"Getting in Touch: Participants" Goals and Issues" by Lucille Fandel: Nice presentation of goal-setting activities.

"Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center Assessment Adventures" by Janet Kelly: Discusses alternative assessment procedures in detail, including tools for initial contact; screening and placement; goals-setting; and progress.

"Down and Dirty Miscue Analysis" by Lindy Whiton: Miscue analysis described; this is useful as an additional placement and/or diagnostic tool.

"The Education Goals Assessment Packet" by Martha Germanowski: Setting goals in detail.

"Alternative Assessment: An Annotated Bibliography" by Don Robishaw, ed.: Brief overview of alternative assessment tools for goal-setting and progress.

Appendix: Samples and examples of actual tools.

Volume 2: Ongoing

All articles focus on ongoing assessment; there are many self-assessment tools described.

"Self-Assessment: Doing and Reflecting" by Paul Trunnel: Describes self-assessment tools useful for goals-setting.

"Three by Three by Four: Ongoing Assessment at the Community Learning Center" by Karen Ebbitt et al.: Goals-setting tools and procedures described.

Appendix: Samples of tools for setting goals and surveying skills.

Volume 3: Looking Back, Starting Again

The first section focuses primarily on reflecting on progress at the end of a cycle; the second section focuses on the cyclic nature of using final evaluation to inform the beginning of a new cycle.

"Assessment and Planning: Giving Students Ownership" by Amy Gluckman et al. Discusses processes of in-take and the review of goals previously set by adult students.

"The Whole-Person Approach in Math Assessment" by Mary Jane Schmitt and Helen Jones. Math assessment in detail including learner comfort; long and short term goals; and initial assessment.

Appendix: Samples of some tools for both initial and on-going assessment.

Volume 4

This volume covers several "getting started" and "ongoing" articles.

"Group Goal Setting Activities" by PECE Resource and Planning Guide: Provides specific tools and procedures for conducting goals-setting with a group.

"Empowering the Student Through Goal-Setting" by Susan Martin et al.: Describes goals-setting procedures including initial assessment, in-take, and on-going measurement.

"The Informal Reading Inventory" by Eileen Barry: This tool is useful as an additional placement and/or diagnostic tool (higher level).

"The ESL Classroom as Community: How Self Assessment Can Work" by Dulany Alexander: Useful procedure for aiding the goal-setting process.

Volume 5: Tale of the Tools

This volume focuses entirely on tools for use in on-going assessment; although not the focus of this annotated

bibliography, I highly recommend this volume: the tools described are excellent. This article, however, is relevant to this document:

"The Case for Pre-Goal Setting" by Don Robishaw: Goal-setting is described as a strategy as opposed to a static activity; interestingly, the recent move to revise Massachusetts' Goal-Setting Process raises some of the same issues that Don did in his article from 1993.

Volume 6: Responding to the Dream Conference

This volume focuses on writers' reflections and use of the first 5 volumes of Adventures in Assessment. Dispersed throughout is commentary on the points of goal-setting and alternative assessment procedures and tools. Of relevance to this document's purpose:

"Affirmation for Pre-Goal Setting" by Anne Marie DeMartino: This letter is in response to Don Robishaw's article from Volume 5, described above.

Volume 7: Partnership Project

This volume focuses on teachers as researchers in partnership with one another. Many of the articles reflect on on-going classroom events and progress of learners; of special interest is some focus on examining adult students' self-esteem and motivation.

"Taking Time to Talk: Students and Teachers Setting Goals" by Marty Tassi-Richardson and Deirdre McLaughlin: Procedures and tools for the goal-setting process developed in response to dissatisfaction with those in use at that time at a particular program.

"Self-Assessment for the Beginner: A Goals Oriented Approach" by Rudee Atlas and Dan Wilson: Although the focus is really about the on-going assessment process, this article provides some ideas for helping students identify goals and monitor achievements through self-assessment at lower levels and in a non-threatening format.

"Bottoms Up: An Alternative Self-Directed Readiness Training Program" by Don Robishaw: A follow-up article to Don's earlier one on the Pre-Goal Setting Process (Volumes 5); the program described is really for the on-going classroom, but still provides good ideas for making the goal-setting process more meaningful/valuable; some points could be adapted so that they could be incorporated into initial processes.

"Authentic Assessment in the Workplace" by Debbie Tuler: Describes the start of the program; discusses initial assessment tools/procedures, initial selection process, curriculum/materials development; includes descriptions of an orientation and interview process.

Volume 8

Covers a range of articles that focus on the influence/affect of alternative assessment on topics from education reform to program management to learner involvement.

Volume 9

The articles focus on examining how teachers (and students) assess continually in their classrooms.

"Assessment in the ESOL Experience" by Elizabeth Santiago: Discusses alternative and commercial tools for placement and initial assessment.

"Developing a Native Language Literacy Program" by Michelle Brown: Describes the quest by this program to find/develop an appropriate diagnostic tool for adults struggling with reading/writing skills in their own language.

"Learning from Experience: The Native Language Literacy Screening Device" by Deborah Mercier-Cuenca: This tool is reviewed; ordering information is provided.

Volume 10

Volume 10 covers articles discussing ways that practitioners try to integrate both commercial and alternative assessments into their instruction.

"The Haitian Multi-Service Center Experience" by Maria Kephallenou: Describes purposes of assessment from the different points of view of the participants (student, teacher, counselor, etc.); gives overviews of each, and includes overviews of intake/placement, and exit/entrance criteria; examples of tools are provided.

"Where's the EGAP These Days?" by Martha Jean: This article briefly updates this tool, whose acronym stands for Educational Goals Assessment Package; it is designed to capture a range of student's interests, goals, and some skill ability; examples of some of the tools are provided; the article does not give contact information, but I am aware that the practitioner-writer presently works with the YALD program.

"One Family Literacy Program's Assessment Story" by Sylvia Greene et al: The article describes their initial assessment and in-take processes and provides examples of tools; on-going and exit assessment procedures are also overviewed.

"The History of the BEST" by Moria Lucey; "Why I Think the BEST Isn't Good Enough" by Dulany Alexander; "The BEST is Workable, But It's Not the Only Choice" by Barbara Lippel-Paul; "An AmeriCorps Volunteer's First Impressions of the BEST" by Rachael Donnelly: I add these articles, whose titles are self-explanatory, for your information.

"What Counts? Assessing Computer Skills" by Kenneth Tamarkin: This article describes a tool and process designed to gauge the appropriate placement level for students; tool is also used to help measure progress.

"The TABE: Thoughts from an Inquiring Mind" by Cathy Coleman: The article reviews and critiques this test.

Volume 11

These articles generally focus on how assessment is, or can be connected

to teaching, learning, and program accountability.

"This is Only a Test" by Janet Isserlis: While this article does not focus on this document's purpose, Janet provides several web resources at the end including: 'Let's Get Started: An initial assessment pack for adult literacy programs' found at *http://www.nald.ca/cl/get-started/cover.htm*; in addition, I highly recommend Janet's website for us all: I find it to be one of the most comprehensive adult/non-traditional education websites around; found at *http://www.brown.edu/departments/swearer_center/literacy_resources*

"The More Things Change, the More They Seem to Stay the Same" by Maria Elena Gonzalez: The article reviews various initial assessment tools used over the course of several cycles of a program; examples of several tools are provided.

"Authentic and Learner-Centered Assessment in the Beginning ESOL Classroom" by Glen Cotton: While most of this article focuses on the practitioner-writer's research and subsequent classroom work, it does provide a brief description of processes for assessing learner purposes for learning English.

"Reflections on Meeting the Challenge of Assessment with Beginning Students" by Cheryl Gant: This article describes processes and tools (both commercial and alternative) that can be used to determine goals, and as a diagnostic at the lower ESOL level.

New Ways of Classroom Assessment by J.D. Brown, ed. as reviewed by Nancy Pendleton et al: Their review is quite positive and they note that the activities presented in the book include questions for pre-goal setting and self-assessment.

Volume 12

This volume focuses on teachers' and administrators' experiences working with standards-based reform initiatives.

"To TABE or Not to TABE: One Agency's Options" By Bernie Driscoll: This article describes an agency's alternative placement tool for students of math; the math tool, which does not appear appropriate for very low levels, is provided.

Volume 13: Meeting the Accountability Challenge

All the articles focus on practitioners' and administrators' efforts to meet state and federal accountability demands.

"Authentic Goal Setting with ABE Learners: Accountability for Programs or Process for Learning" by Sally Gabb: Sally provides a review of some of the articles focused on setting goals in Adventures in Assessment over the years; she also critiques the goal-setting process as it is presently carried out in Massachusetts.

"Quinsigamond Community College's Site-Specific Assessment' by Chris Hebert et al: The article describes the program's test for placing students at the SPL 7-10; the assessment is provided.

Volume 14: Examining Performance

All the articles in this volume discuss efforts to capture performance without the use of traditional or commercial tests.

"Assessing Oral Communication at the Community Learning Center" by JoAnne Hartel and Mina Reddy: The article describes the agency's test that can be used as a placement and diagnostic tool; examples of the tool are provided.

"So what is a BROVI, Anyway? And how can it change your (assessing) life?" by Betty Stone and Vicki Halal: While the tool is generally for on-going assessment purposes, many of the activities described can be adapted for use as a placement or diagnostic; examples of the tool are provided.

"A Writing Rubric to Assess ESL Student Performance" by Inaam Mansoor and Suzanne Grant: The REEP tool is described and the rubric is provided; as Massachusetts' practitioners now know, the tool is also used for placement purposes.

"Illuminating Understanding: Performance Assessment in Mathematics" by Tricia Donovan: This articles describes a process and rubric for working with performance assessment; while no specific tool or activity is presented, the approach is highly useful for practitioners in determining measures and diagnostic information when developing their own intake and placement tools.

Marie Cora is the Assessment Specialist for SABES and the editor of Adventures in Assessment.

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